

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 24, 2012
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
HDP-2012-0281
2818 RIO GRANDE STREET

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1923 house.

ARCHITECTURE

One-and-a-half story, rectangular-plan front-gabled frame bungalow with a partial-width, front-gabled independent porch on brick piers and battered wood posts; paired and triple 1:1 fenestration; porte-cochere to the left of the main block of the house with a side-gabled rectangular-plan frame addition above.

RESEARCH

City directory research indicates that the house was built in 1923; the first occupants were renters, Joel (Jack) and Bessie Gunn, who moved here from a farm in Deport, Texas in the northeastern corner of the state, near Paris. Not much is known about the Gunns after they moved to Austin; they never had an occupation listed in the city directories nor in the census reports of the period. They lived here until around 1926, when they moved to a house on W. 22nd Street. By 1940, Joel Gunn was working as a school custodian. Their adult children lived with them: Joel Gunn, Jr. was a book-keeper for a shoe store, Bess Gunn had a dress shop, and Cordelia Kuhlman was a clerk in an electric shop, her husband Richard Kuhlman was an architect for the FHA.

After the Gunns moved out in 1926, the house was owned and occupied by Ben and Bessie Pilcher, who lived here until around 1936. Ben Pilcher was originally from southeastern Ohio, where he had been the superintendent of schools for a small town. While in Austin, Ben Pilcher was a schoolbook salesman. The Pilchers moved out of the house in 1936 to a house on Bouldin Avenue in South Austin.

The next occupants were renters Fred and Ona Caldwell, who lived here from around 1937 to 1941. Fred Caldwell was a refrigerator salesman from Seguin, Texas; city directory listings show him as a grocer, but the 1940 U.S. Census report shows him to have been a salesman. Ona Caldwell worked in a dry goods store while the family lived here.

The house continued to be a rental unit until the late 1950s; around 1952, the house was rented by Paul (P.K.) and Ruth Odiorne. P.K. Odiorne had a real estate business in town, but was probably best known as the proprietor of the P-K Grille. Carpenter R.T. Davis and his wife, Josie purchased the house in the late 1950s and lived here until the late 1970s. The house has been a rental unit since that time.

STAFF COMMENTS

The house is listed as a Priority 2 for research in the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey (1984).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Recommend relocation over demolition. The house does not have sufficient architectural or historical significance to warrant individual landmark designation, but appears to be sound and a good example of a large bungalow style. In either case of relocation or demolition, staff recommends the submittal of a City of Austin Documentation Package consisting of photographs of all elevations of the house, a dimensioned sketch plan, and a narrative history of the house.

2818 Rio Grande Street
ca. 1923



OCCUPANCY HISTORY
2818 Rio Grande Street

City Directory Research, Austin History Center
By City Historic Preservation Office
February, 2007

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1992 | Tom Ramirez, renter
No occupation listed
NOTE: The directory indicates that Tom Ramirez was a new resident at this address. |
| 1987 | Jodi Davis, renter
No occupation listed |
| 1981 | No return |
| 1975 | R.T. and Josie Davis, owners
Carpenter |
| 1969 | R.T. and Josie Davis, owners
Carpenter |

1963 R.T. and Josie Davis, owners
Carpenter

1959 R.T. and Josephine Davis, owners
Carpenter

1955 Yolande Langfield, renter
Widow, H.M. Langfield
Office secretary, James P. Nash, oil operator, 406 Nash Building

1952 Paul K. and Ruth M. Odiorne, renters
Proprietor, Paul K. Odiorne Real Estate Company, 606 Brazos Street

1949 Dwight E. and Marguerite J. Farr, renters
Architect, 511 Walsh Street
Also listed is Dwight E. Farr, Jr., a student at UT.

1947 Fred E. and Ann Grothaus, renters
Fred: Civil engineer
Ann: Student, UT

1944-45 Fred E. and Bernice Grothaus, renters
No occupation listed

1942 Milton E. and Dorothy G. Hart, renters
No occupation listed

1940 Fred and Ona Caldwell, renters
Grocer, 930 W. 5th Street

1937 Fred and Ona P. Caldwell, renters
Refrigeration engineer
Also listed is Fred M. Caldwell, a radio-man at Lindsay Auto Electric.

1935 Benjamin L. and Bessie Pilcher, owners
Traveling salesman

1932-33 Benjamin L. and Bessie Pilcher, owners
Traveling salesman

1930-31 Benjamin L. and Bessie K. Pilcher, owners
Traveling salesman
Also listed is Benjamin L. Pilcher, Jr., a student at the University of Texas

1929 Benjamin L. and Bessie Pilcher, owners
No occupation listed
Also listed is Benjamin L. Pilcher, Jr., a student at the University of Texas

1927 Benjamin L. and Bessie Pilcher, owners
No occupation listed
Also listed is Benjamin L. Pilcher, Jr., a student at the University of Texas

1924 Joel E. and Bessie Gunn, renters
No occupation listed

Also listed are Daniel W. Gunn, a student at the University of Texas; Matilda Gunn, a student at the University of Texas; and William T. Gunn, a student at the University of Texas.

1922 The address is not listed in the directory.
NOTE: Joel E. and Bessie Gunn are not listed in the directory.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

JOEL (or JACK) and BESSIE GUNN (ca. 1923 – ca. 1926)

Before moving to Austin and this house, Joel and Bessie Gunn lived on a farm at Deport, Lamar County, Texas, according to the 1920 U.S. Census report. Joel Gunn had no occupation listed in the census report. After moving from this house around 1926, the Gunn family lived at 706 W. 22nd Street, a house they owned, worth \$6,000, as shown in the 1930 U.S. Census report. Mr. Gunn is listed as “Jack” Gunn; he was born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. He was 55 years old. Bessie Gunn was 50 years old and had been born in Texas. Their son Joel Gunn, Jr. was 21, had been born in Texas and worked as a salesman for a hosiery company. Daughter Bess Gunn was 15, and attended school, as did daughter Cordelia, aged 13. Gunn’s mother-in-law, D.W. Walker, aged 86, lived in the house with them; she had been born in Alabama. The Gunns also had 2 lodgers, William H. Clarke, aged 24, a hotel clerk, and Ralph Moore, aged 22, a printer for the newspaper. The children listed in the 1924 city directory do not appear in the 1930 Census report. The 1940 U.S. Census shows the Gunn family still at 706 W. 22nd Street. Joel Gunn was then 65, and worked as a custodian for a state building. His wife is listed as Mathilda Gunn, who was then 59. With them lived their children, Bessie Gunn, 37, who had her own dress shop, Joel Gunn, Jr., 30, who worked as a book-keeper for a shoe store, and daughter Cordelia, who was married to Richard Kuhlman, an architect for the FHA. Cordelia Kuhlman was a clerk for a retail electrical shop. Joel Gunn, Sr. died in Travis County June 28, 1947. Bessie Gunn died in Travis County December 21, 1967. Neither Joel nor Bessie Gunn had an obituary published in the Austin newspapers.

49-2-25-C		REGISTRATION CARD	
SERIAL NUMBER	645	OTHER NUMBER	433
1. Name: <i>Joel Elsie Gunn</i>			
2. RESIDENT HOME ADDRESS: <i>Deport, Lamar Co.</i>			
Age in Years: <i>36</i> Date of Birth: <i>May 20 1874</i>			
RACE: <i>White</i>			
U. S. CITIZENSHIP: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> U. S. Citizen <input type="checkbox"/> Alien			
13. Present Occupation: <i>Farmer & Ginner</i> Employer's Name: <i>Self</i>			
14. Place of Birth: <i>Deport, Lamar Co.</i>			
15. Name of Nearest Relative: <i>Bessie Gunn</i> Address: <i>Deport, Lamar Co.</i>			
I declare that I have searched my files and find no other files on this registrant.			
Date: <i>Sept 17 1918</i> Registrar: <i>W. J. Lawler</i>			

49-2-25-C		REGISTRAR'S REPORT	
DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT			
HEIGHT	BUILD	COLOR OF EYES	COLOR OF HAIR
Tot. <i>5</i> Medium <i>21</i> Short <i>21</i> Medium <i>25</i> Tall <i>28</i>	<i>7</i> <i>21</i> <i>25</i> <i>28</i>	<i>Blue</i>	<i>Dark</i>
21. Has person lost any leg, hand, eye, or other substantial physical qualification? <i>No</i>			
22. I certify that my answers are true; that the person registered has read or has had read to him his own answers; that I have witnessed his signature or those and that all his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:			
Local Board No. 2 Lamar County, TEXAS			

Joel Gunn's World War I draft registration card shows that he was born in May, 1874, was living at Deport, Lamar County, Texas, and was a self-employed farmer and ginner. His occupation is also confirmed by the 1910 U.S. Census report for Lamar County, Texas.

BENJAMIN L. and BESSIE K. PILCHER (ca. 1926 – ca. 1936)

The 1920 U.S. Census shows Benjamin and Bessie Pilcher living in Coolville, Athens County, Ohio, where Benjamin was the superintendent of schools. Ben and Bessie were both then 42 and both had been born in Ohio. Their son, John, 15, was a newsboy; son Benjamin, Jr. 13, had no occupation listed. Both boys had been born in Illinois. According to the 1930 U.S. Census, the Pilchers lived in this house on Rio Grande Street, which they owned, and which was worth \$9,000. Ben L. Pilcher was listed as an agent for a book publishing house. John was 25, and had no listed occupation. Ben L. Pilcher, Jr., was 23, and was listed as a field worker. The Pilcher family moved to 709 Bouldin Avenue after living in this house. Ben Pilcher died in Travis County May 6, 1938. Bessie Pilcher died in Mexico in 1954.

~~PILCHER~~ Benjamin L. Pilcher, 61, died at the residence, 709 Bouldin avenue, Friday. Survivors are his widow, Mrs. Bessie Pilcher; two sons, Dr. John F. Pilcher of Corpus Christi, Ben L. Pilcher of Pampa; one foster daughter, Iona Smith of Zitacuaro, Mex.; one sister, Mrs. F. C. Kirkendall of Zanesville, Ohio; two brothers, George S. Pilcher of Athens, Ohio, Karl S. Pilcher of Yakima, Wash. Mr. Pilcher has been a ruling elder of the University Presbyterian church for many years.

Funeral services will be held from the University Presbyterian church Monday morning at 10 o'clock with Dr. Conway Wharton officiating, assisted by the Rev. J. G. Cavazos. Burial will be in the Austin Memorial park. Pallbearers will be W. J. Evers, W. A. Smith, D. P. Craddock, H. C. Yantis, W. C. Youngs and F. D. Kerbow.

Obituary of Benjamin L. Pilcher
Austin Statesman, May 7, 1938

MRS. B. L. PILCHER

Mrs. B. L. Pilcher, former resident of Austin, died at her home in Morelia, Mexico, Monday. In Austin, she had been a member of the University Presbyterian Church.

Survivors are a daughter, Miss Iona Smith of Morelia, and a son, Dr. John F. Pilcher of Corpus Christi.

The body will be received by the Cook Funeral Home Wednesday.

Graveside services will be held Thursday at 10 a.m. at Austin Memorial Park. Dr. Robert F. Gribble will officiate.

Obituary of Bessie Pilcher
Austin American, October 20, 1954

MRS. B. L. PILCHER

Graveside services for Mrs. B. L. Pilcher will be held Thursday at 10 a.m. at Austin Memorial Park with Dr. Robert F. Gribble officiating and under the direction of the Cook Funeral Home.

Pallbearers will be Fred Adams, W. A. Cunningham, Dewitt Reddick, Dr. Daniel Penick, John McCurdy and Hulon Black.

Funeral notice for Bessie Pilcher
Austin American, October 21, 1954

FRED and ONA CALDWELL (ca. 1936 – ca. 1941)

Fredrick and Ona Caldwell appear in the 1940 U.S. Census report at this address. Fred was then 55, had been born in Texas, and was a salesman. Ona Caldwell was then 48, had been born in Texas, and was a saleswoman in a dry goods store. They had two children, Fred, 25, a radio announcer, and Ona, 21, a stenographer. The 1930 U.S. Census shows the Caldwell family living in a rented house in Seguin, Texas, where Fred was a refrigerator salesman. The 1920 census report also shows the family in Seguin, and Fred is listed as a salesman. The family moved from this house to another house at 607 W. 17th Street. Fred Caldwell died in Travis County September 6, 1960. Ona Caldwell died in Travis County August 10, 1976.

FRED CALDWELL

Fred Caldwell, 75, of 607 West 17th Street, died in a local hospital Tuesday morning. He had been a resident of Austin for 28 years.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Fred Caldwell; one son, Fred M. Caldwell, Austin; one daughter, Mrs. Ona Von Noy, Galveston; one sister, Miss Pattie Caldwell, Boulder, Colo.; one brother, Jess Caldwell, Tucson, Ariz.

Funeral services will be held at Weed-Corley Funeral Home Wednesday at 10 a. m. Dr. John Barclay will officiate and burial will be in Austin Memorial Park.

Pallbearers will be Lee Borth, Dr. William Sellingsloh, Lee Dickerson, Bob Seago, Howard Peterson and Ralph Tippit.

Obituary of Fred Caldwell
Austin American, September 7, 1960

**CALDWELL, Mrs. Fred
(Ona), 607 W. 17th St., died
Tuesday. Services 11 a.m.
Thursday at Weed-Corley
Funeral Home.**

Obituary of Ona Caldwell
Austin American-Statesman, August 12, 1976

DWIGHT E. and MARGUERITE FARR (ca. 1948 – ca. 1951)

According to the 1930 U.S. Census, Dwight Farr was a 27-year old chief estimator for a quarry. He had been born in Indiana, and rented the house at 1106 Travis Heights Boulevard. His wife, Marguerite, was 26 and had been born in Kansas. They had two children, Billie Jane Farr, aged 3, and Dwight E. Farr, Jr., aged 1. Both children had been born in Texas. The 1940 U.S. Census shows the family living at 2606 E. 23rd Street, a house they owned. Dwight Farr was listed as an estimator and draftsman for a rock quarry. In addition to Billie Jane and Dwight, Jr., the couple had a third child, Marjorie, who was then 9 years old. Dwight E. Farr, Sr. died July 8, 1962 in Travis County.

DWIGHT E. FARR, SR.

Dwight E. Farr, Sr., 2800 Almarion Drive, died in a local hospital Sunday. He had lived in Austin for 25 years and was a member of the Central Christian Church. He was a member of Austin Lodge No. 12, AF & AM, and Scottish Rite Bodies and the Ben Hur Shrine.

Survivors are his wife, Mrs. Marguerite J. Farr; two daughters, Mrs. Bob Spann of Corpus Christi, and Mrs. Frank M. Allen, Jr. of Smithville; one son, Dwight E. Farr, Jr. of Austin; and three brothers, Paul Farr of Marian, Indiana, Courtney E. Farr, and Ransom Farr, both of Houston.

Funeral services will be held Thursday at 10:00, at Central Christian Church with Dr. John Barclay officiating. Burial will be in Austin Memorial Park.

Obituary of Dwight E. Farr
 Austin American, July 10, 1962

PAUL K. and RUTH ODIORNE (ca. 1951 – ca. 1954)

Paul Odiorne shows up in the 1920 census report as the 19-year old son of widow Otthle Odiorne; Paul is listed as a laborer on his mother's farm in Burnet County, Texas. The 1930 U.S. Census report shows Paul and his mother living in University Park, Dallas, where his mother ran a rooming house and Paul ran a restaurant. The 1940 U.S. Census shows Paul and Ruth Odiorne living in New Braunfels, Texas, where Paul, then 39, owned a café. Ruth Odiorne, 30, was the cashier at the café. They had a son, Kenneth, who was then 3. All had been born in Texas. Paul Odiorne died in Harris County February 8, 1967; Ruth Odiorne died in Burnet County in 1995.

P. K. ODIORNE

BURNET — P. K. Odiorne, 65, died in a Houston hospital Wednesday.

Originator of the P.K. sandwich shops in Austin, Odiorne was a native of Marble Falls, and had been living in Houston the past 10 years.

Funeral will be Friday at 4 p.m. at First Baptist Church here with Rev. Max Copeland officiating. Burial will be in the City Cemetery here under direction of Clements Funeral Home of Burnet.

Survivors include his widow; son, Kenneth Hugh Odiorne, Denver; two daughters, Mrs. Ellan Derow, Oxford, England, and Mrs. Frances Breunig, Houston; brother, Lee Odiorne, Marble Falls; two sisters, Mrs. Winona Millisack, Tucson, Ariz., and Mrs. Julia Steele, Amarillo; and five grandchildren.

Obituary of Paul K. Odiorne
Austin American, February 10, 1967

Ruth Odiorne

Ruth Marie Saxon Odiorne passed away Wednesday, November 29, 1995, at the age of 86, while a resident of the Bertram Nursing Home in Bertram, Texas, in Burnet County.

Mrs. Odiorne retired in 1975 after a long career in elementary school teaching. Mrs. Odiorne began her teaching career in Marble Falls in 1931. After her marriage to Paul Kuhnel (PK) Odiorne, restaurant owner and realtor, in 1934. She raised a family, returning in 1948 to teach for two years in Burnet. She then moved to Austin, teaching for nine years at Ridgetop Elementary School and then for 16 years in the Spring Branch School District near Houston, at Valley Oaks and Pine Shadows Elementary Schools. She was a member of the teacher's honor society, Delta Kappa Epsilon.

Mrs. Odiorne was born on September 22, 1909, in Marlin, Texas, the daughter and last surviving of the four children of the Reverend Charles E. Saxon and Nannie Ella Macon Saxon. She graduated from Fort Worth High School where she made the State Girls Basketball Team in 1927, and from Mary Hardin Baylor College in 1934. For the past several years, she resided in Bertram, Texas.

Survivors include three children, Kenneth Hugh Odiorne of Bertram, Ellan Kuhnel Derow of Oxford, England and Frances Elizabeth Butcher of Wooster, Ohio; nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Services for Mrs. Odiorne will be at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, December 2, 1995, at the First Baptist Church in Marble Falls, Texas, with Reverend Max Copeland officiating. Interment at Marble Falls City Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the American Cancer Society or your favorite charity or organization.

Arrangements by Clements-Wilcox Funeral Home in Burnet, Texas.

Obituary of Ruth Odiorne
Austin American-Statesman, November 30,
1995

